

Communicating with Caregivers

Who Are our Nation's Caregivers?

Most Americans will be a caregiver to a family member or friend—sometimes called “informal caregivers”—at some point during their lives. Altogether, informal caregivers provide the majority of the long-term care in the United States. As you plan your outreach to caregivers, first take some time to familiarize yourself with the nature of that audience and demographic. Understanding the typical profile of a caregiver will be very useful in targeting your outreach efforts. Following are some characteristics of caregivers today:

- The majority of caregivers are women.
- Most caregivers are middle-aged, and some of them may even be struggling with their own health
- Many caregivers are Baby Boomers (aged 50-64) who are actively employed, working either full time or part time.

How Can I Influence the Influencers?

When communicating with caregivers, remember they:

- Are looking for answers and services that can help the senior.
- May be concerned about financial costs.
- May be limited on time. Most caretakers are typically short on time and are pulled in many directions. Some may be working or raising their own children.
- Are interested in the “process” of applying for SNAP benefits and how to make this process most efficient.
- Walk a fine line as they try to preserve the dignity of those in their care who may not agree with the decisions being made, especially about applying for SNAP or other public assistance. This balance cannot be overstressed.



Communicating with Caregivers about SNAP

When communicating to caregivers about SNAP, it will be important to:

- **Acknowledge the important role** of the caregiver and show understanding of the responsibility involved.
- **Stress your concern** for the senior and commitment to making the process as simple as possible.
- **Clearly lay out the eligibility rules** and guidelines. Eligibility rules for elderly and disabled persons are different.
- **Reassure the caregiver** that there are no hidden costs to the senior or responsible party, and that applying for SNAP does not require multiple appointments. Be sure to cover telephone interviews and authorized representatives.
- **Provide caregivers with examples** of how to file SNAP applications– drop off at local office, mail, fax, email in some States, or by authorized representative.
- **Refer caregivers to outreach workers** who can provide one-on-one application assistance such as filling out the form, prescreening for benefits, gathering the verification documents, or sitting in on the interview.
- **Provide examples** of how SNAP benefits can be used if the senior no longer cooks at home. Explain that the senior can authorize someone to do the grocery shopping.